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MEETING THE PUBLIC DEMAND

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An old fable tells of an adventuresome young knight who entered boldly the mouth of a great cavern. After threading his way for a time through dark winding chambers he attempted to return to the light. Turn as he would, only endless dark passage-ways opened to him. Undaunted, he slowly groped his way from darkness to denser darkness. Suddenly, when heart and spirit seemed well-nigh broken, his outstretched hand touched a soft quivering thing. Eagerly he seized it, and in spite of its cries and struggles, he held it fast. Then, as if by instinct, he took hold of the creature's tail and began to follow it in its frantic efforts to escape. On and on, through darkest mazes, the knight followed, ever holding to the struggling thing. Far ahead, a dim gray softened the darkness. Then a gleam of light appeared. The knight in rapture released the little fox which ran swiftly ahead and escaped to the light. The knight followed rapidly; but he came to the glowing light only to discover that the opening through which his little guide had fled was too small to permit him to pass, and he was left a prisoner of darkness and despair.

From investigations which have been carried on for the past six years, and from thousands of press articles and personal comments, it might be inferred that this old fable is an apt symbol of the public estimate of the traditional teacher of English and his helpless pupil. The general opinion of the teacher seems to be that "He saves himself, others he cannot save."

Does the public *really* condemn the teaching of English as the work is conducted in our high schools, colleges, and universities? "Certainly not," it may be answered, "because the relative amount of time given to English in college and high-school courses is greatly increased. Public sentiment has demanded the increase." When this statement is analyzed closely, one wonders whether the demand for the increased emphasis of the study of English is the

fruit of efficient teaching or an expression of public sentiment in favor of giving the teachers of English another chance. At any rate, during the last decade the public has demanded more required work in English both in high schools and in colleges.

Personally, I am unwilling to subscribe to the thesis that the traditional English courses are wholly poor. These traditional courses have been founded upon holy zeal—the zeal to teach pupils to write well and to speak well. Assuming that the teachers themselves have acquired proficiency in writing and in speaking, results show that their pupil-followers are sometimes left in the cave of darkness. In so far, however, as the traditional courses have resulted in better speaking and better writing, they have met with public approval. On the other hand, these greatly extended courses of study place a definite responsibility upon the teacher of English to get definite and tangible results.

What does the public demand of the teacher of English? In attempting to answer the question, I desire to offer summaries of estimates in answer to each of the three following questions: (1) What do average persons read? (2) What relative emphasis is placed upon writing, reading, and speaking in doing everyday work? (3) What "irreducible minimum" of results is demanded by the public for the average successful worker in professional, business, or in other occupational life?

In answer to the first question, 10,000 estimates given by the readers themselves are summarized as follows:

TABLE I

WHAT THE PEOPLE READ

Classes of Persons	Number in Each Class	Average Number of Hours Each Person Spends on Modern Fiction for Each Hour Spent on Approved Standard Classics	Average Number of Hours Each Person Spends on Newspapers and Magazines for Each Hour Spent on Approved Standard Classics
College students	3,000	9	191
Pupils, city graded and high schools	600	6	56
Pupils, rural schools	400	6	97
Parents of college students	6,000	12	897
Total and averages	10,000	8.25 1	310.25 39.7

If these estimates are approximately correct, they point us to the necessity to train pupils to read newspapers and magazines with discrimination. If properly directed by enthusiastic, discriminating teachers, the pupils will develop right choices and refined tastes through the right study of current literature. From these beginnings, pupils can be led naturally to discern and to appreciate the so-called "higher beauties." If the individual life follows the course of race development, the wisdom of proceeding from the near, the simple, and the known to the remote, the complex, and the unknown is self-evident.

In answer to the second question, "What relative emphasis is placed upon writing, reading, and speaking in doing everyday work?" I desire to offer a summary of estimates covering the language use of 1,500 farmers and that of the professional, business, and other occupational workers in a city of 10,000.

TABLE II

ESTIMATES SHOWING THE RELATIVE EMPHASIS PLACED UPON WRITING, READING, AND SPEAKING IN TRANSACTING THE AFFAIRS OF LIFE

Persons Classified as to Occupation in City of 10,000 and Surroundings	Number	Number of Units of *Reading* for Each Unit of Writing	Number of Units of *Speaking* for Each Unit of Reading	Number of Units of *Speaking* for Each Unit of Writing
Lawyers	40	21	26	212
Physicians	40	34	44	598
Ministers	80	41	60	992
Teachers	200	37	74	1,095
Merchants	360	26	54	567
Clerks	320	24	70	676
Barbers	40	36	80	1,159
Commercial salesmen	200	41	90	1,544
Printers and newspaper men	80	19	23	178
Authors	40	31	21	260
Day laborers	540	57	82	1,881
Farmers	1,500	45	63	1,143

Such a table, corrected to the last degree for error and variation, but reveals the public need for continued effective work in writing and in reading, and for the addition of greatly expanded and enriched courses in oral English. In theory, the traditional courses of study recognize the value of speaking well. New courses must be introduced until, through practice, the results demanded may be heard and appreciated.

TABLE III

MINIMUM COMMUNITY DEMANDS IN ENGLISH

Classes	Number	Minimum Desired Training for Average Worker (Reported by over 60 per cent)
		Clear ready speech
		Accurate pronunciation
		Good conversational powers
		Clear presentation of facts
		Ability to close a deal
Business men		Ability to read
Clerks	320	Advertisements
Traveling salesmen	200	Descriptions of articles
Merchants	360	Current literature
		Good books
Total	880	Ability to write
		Accurate spelling
		Good penmanship
		Good business letter
		Clever advertisement
		Clever news item or story
		Ability to think clearly in all these relationships
		Clear, ready speech
		After-dinner speaking
		Before jury
		In pulpit
		With patient
Professional men		Ability to read
Lawyers	40	For general information
Physicians	40	For technical information
Ministers	80	Special professional journals
Teachers	200	Good books
Newspaper men	80	Ability to write
Authors and editors	40	Accurate spelling
		Briefs, business letters, forms, reports
Total	480	Technical articles
		Advertisements, printing, editing
		News and feature stories
		Ability to investigate, gather, organize, and summarize facts
		Expression—sense
		Thinking new things
		Ready speech
		To direct men
Men in other occupations		To explain how things are done
Farmers	1,500	To report facts or news
Day laborers	540	To get along with each other
Semiskilled	200	Ability to read
		Newspapers (current literature)
Total	2,240	Plans, specifications, directions
		Letters, contracts
		Ability to write
Grand total	3,600	Letters
		Use other business forms
		To keep from being swindled

Third, what irreducible minimum of results does the average successful worker in professional life, business life, or other occupational life demand?

It was thought best to let 3,600 representatives of these classes speak for themselves. Here is a table showing the least language training a majority of these workers thought they should have in order to make a moderate success of their work.

The least this summary of minimum demands can possibly indicate, is that all plans of work designed to prepare any of these workers for average usefulness must include: (1) complete courses in oral composition, oral salesmanship, and training in the several other kinds of speaking shown; (2) complete courses in current literature based upon newspapers, magazines, and special and professional journals; (3) greater emphasis of written work, of accuracy in spelling, business letters and forms, briefs, reports, news writing, advertisement writing, printing, and editing; (4) greater emphasis upon training to gather, organize, and interpret facts; (5) suggestions for drawing illustrations from the life of the pupil, and equipment to train him at real work.

Such innovations completely introduced would imply a much more adequate physical equipment for the teaching of English. To meet the demands, schools and colleges should have at least: (1) adequate conference, work, and special study rooms; (2) typewriters, stenographers, dictaphones, duplicators, business filing systems, stereopticons, and moving-picture apparatus; (3) a well-equipped printing plant; (4) newspaper file and morgue, advertising files and equipment, and editorial rooms; (5) a library containing the best available books, newspapers, and magazines.

Then by some miracle of divine grace there should be sifted into every teacher's heart the magic which could induce even a teacher of chemistry or a professor of mathematics to co-operate to the extent that neither oral nor written work would be accepted unless the speaker or writer had presented it in the very best English form. With this equipment, and with these plain common-sense practices, the teachers of English can secure adequate funds for their work, and can more nearly meet the demands in the world's great open market.